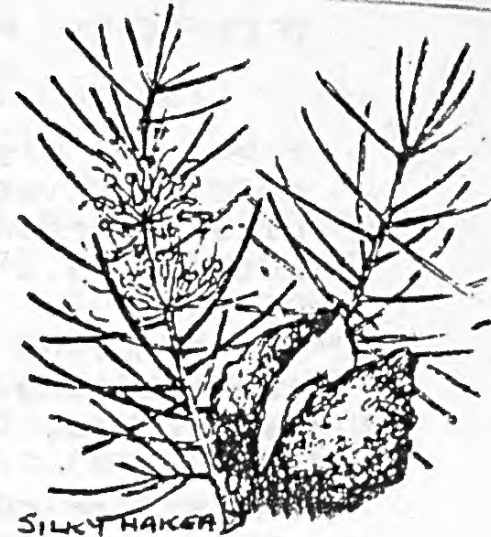


CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



SEPTEMBER 1988

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If you can't beat them, eat them.

One of a series.

SHEEP SORRELL (*Rumex acetosella*)

Sheep sorrell is a common weed in the district. Some of the local farmlands have a decided reddish tinge due to the prevalence of this weed. It has leaves with backward-pointing lobes at the base, and slender flower spikes that are greenish at first, becoming red when ripe.

The leaves can be used in salads, or used as a cooked vegetable. The raw leaves are rather sour tasting, due to the oxalic acid content, so consumption should be limited, as oxalic acid is poisonous, and a favoured chemical of some miscreants featured in detective novels. Cooking of sorrell in several changes of boiling water will however remove most of the oxalic acid.



In past times Sheep Sorrell was cultivated in gardens, and was once an important vegetable. It was said to have been a favourite vegetables of Henry VIII.

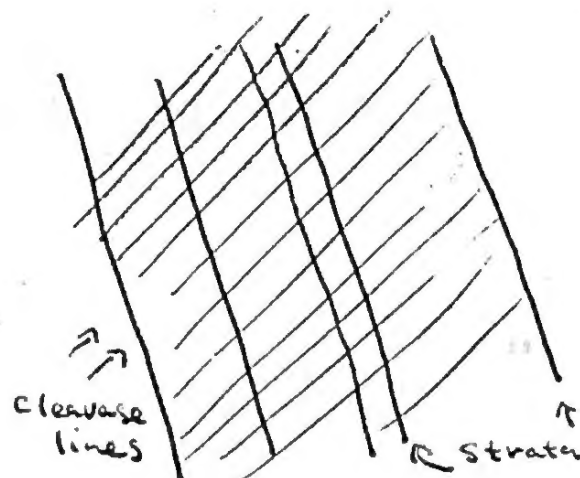
Rumex means "to suck", referring to the habit of sucking dock leaves to quench thirst. *Acetosella* refers to the sour taste of the leaves.

FORDS ROAD ANTICLINE and SYNCLINE

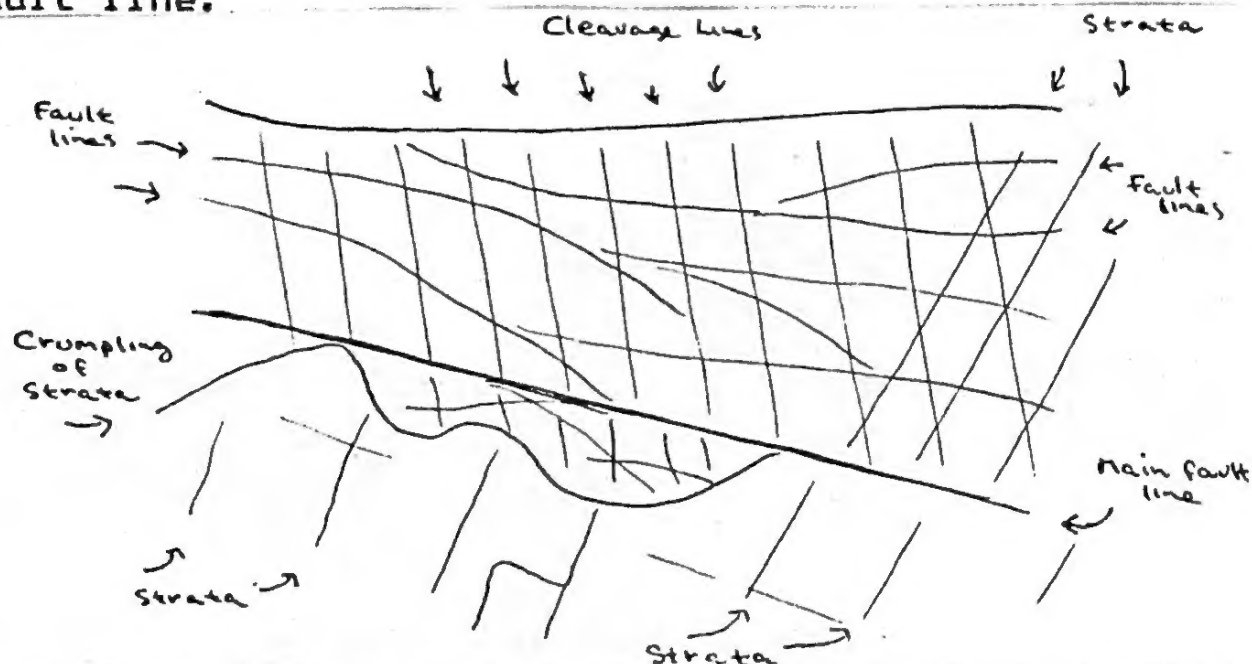
From the highway at Campbells Creek take the cemetery road and veer left after the bridge (on the Mt Consultation road). The syncline is near the far end of the cutting, 1.2 km from the highway.

The syncline is perhaps best seen on the north side of the cutting. The strata are almost curved into a semicircle. There are many features of interest.

Shale (or mudstone) has been changed, as the result of heat and pressure, into slate. The original minerals have recrystallised, and the new cleavage is at right angles to the direction of pressure so that the cleavage planes of the slate are no longer parallel to the bedding planes. This is very well displayed in some of the strata.



A few metres to the east of the syncline there is evidence of considerable faulting. The sketch is a simplified version of the face, and an interpretation of some of the features. The curved lines are probably the result of crumpling caused by the movement along the main fault line.



The flume (water pipe) carries water of Ranters Gully race. This race is close to the 300 m contour.

About a kilometre further, two sandstone reefs outcrop. The slopes of the reefs are / \, indicating an anticline. The reef can be seen on both sides of the road. A small gully on the south side is close the centre of the anticline.

EXCURSION TO LAL LAL

Lal Lal must be one of the most interesting, but least known parts of Victoria.

Lal Lal was the site of Victoria's first blast furnace to produce pig iron, and is the only 19th century blast furnace still in existence anywhere in the southern hemisphere. As well as the furnace there are many features of the site still preserved. These include the foundations of the engine house, and slag runs, where the waste from the furnace was allowed to run down the banks of the Moorabool river. The boiler chimney is of particular interest, as it is built into the side of the hill, and is reminiscent of the chimney at Eureka. A blast furnace, once started, is run continuously, night and day, and the ingredients (iron ore, coke or charcoal, and limestone) are added through the top of the furnace. At Lal Lal the site has been terraced, so that the top terrace is level with the top of the furnace, so that the raw materials do not have to be lifted into the furnace. The iron ore quarries are near-by. The iron ore is said to be 50% iron, but the deposits are not large enough for modern needs. The limestone was brought in from Geelong by rail.

The Lal Lal area was mined for five materials. As well as iron ore, it was mined for brown coal, kaolin (a kind of clay), gold and freestone. We visited the brown coal mine. It is now unused and filled with water.

The Moorabool river has been dammed a few hundred metres upstream to form the Bungal Dam. It is a supply reservoir for Ballarat and Geelong.

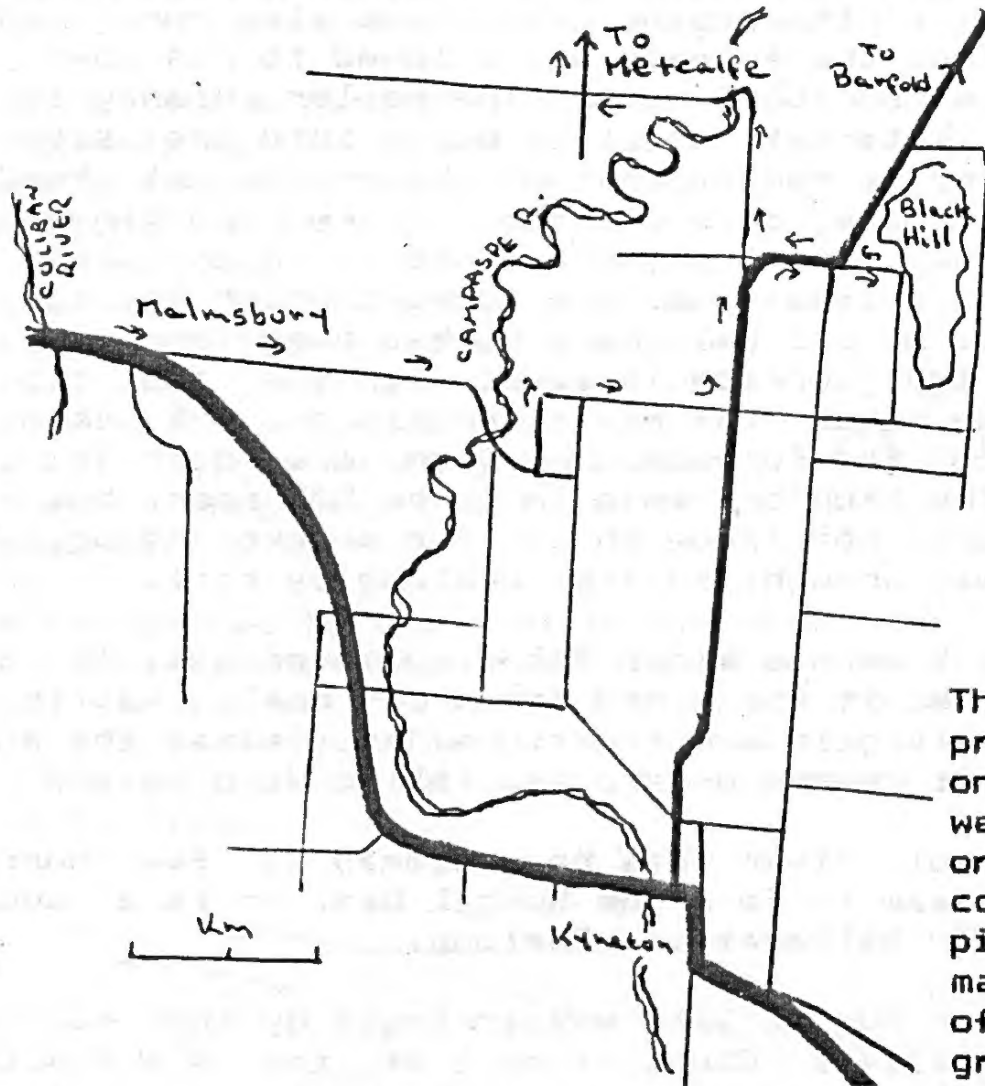
The visit on August 27th was arranged by the Ballarat Field Naturalists Club, as part of the W.V.F.N.C.A. outing. Earlier we were shown the clump of Anchor Plants growing at Lal Lal. Anchor Plants were seen at Newstead by Major Mitchell, and were once fairly common along streams. They are now quite rare, and plants found are very mature. Although Anchor Plant is covered with thorns, it is very soft when young and favoured food for stock. Ballarat F.N.C. has received a grant from C.F. & L. to help preserve the plants. The area is now fenced, and hundreds of plants have been raised from seed and cutting. They will be planted out at Lal Lal, with the aim of greatly increasing the population.

The nearby Lal Lal Falls looked quite spectacular with a good flow of water.

As a end to an most interesting excursion we were shown a patch of bushland with hundreds of Nodding Greenhoods in bloom.

BLACK HILL, KYNETON

[The Club last had an excursion to Black Hill in May, 1977. These notes are based on the those prepared by Max Winterbottom for that excursion. The management of the reserve may now be different. The typer of these notes remembers the beautiful gums growing on some of the gravel areas. It will be interesting to see them 11 years on. A booklet has now been published describing Black Hill Reserve and its flora and fauna.]



The reserve covers some 80 hectares north of Kyneton. It surrounds a granite hill projecting some 100 m. above the landscape and reaching some 610 m. above sea level.

The area comprises 32 ha. on the lower western slopes, originally a council gravel pit from which many thousands of tonnes of gravel was removed.

The pit was closed in 1965 and became a 're-establishment reserve' for the Kyneton Shire. Very creditable efforts by the council are ensuring the eventual healing of scars of extractive industry. Species planted include eucalypts, melaleucas, acacias, banksias etc.

The balance of the reserve over the hill and on the eastern slopes is natural bushland.

Geologically the hill resembles Mt Alexander, and the many fine granite boulders remind one of the Dog Rocks.

At one time the hill was used as a hill-climb and a track leads one nearly to the summit. Vehicles are now banned but fence cutting and intrusion of trail bikes etc. occurs.

The track to the summit is a fairly stiff ten minutes walk but there is plenty of interest on the lower slopes for those not so energetic.

Although shown on some maps as a koala reserve this is not strictly true. Some indigenous koalas are known and the Council proposed further stocking, but owing to the paucity of food trees the idea was abandoned. There are kangaroos in the area but no real survey of flora and fauna has been attempted. Bird life is extensive and increasing as establishment progresses. One sighting the other day was of the beautiful Golden Whistler.

The Council owns a further 16 hA, at present let for grazing, but intended to become part of the reserve. The future of the area is yet undecided. Should it be left well alone or should it be developed as a shire park? That is the question.

Campout at Melville Caves

The itinerary will be fairly flexible. After lunch at the picnic area there will be birdwatching in the area towards the entrance, hopefully with someone who is familiar with that area, and who found a number of Gilbert Whistlers there last time he went. We'll set up camp afterwards. I've contacted the Ranger for his advise re camping spots, walking tracks etc. Over the next two days I hope to spend some time birdwatching at the old Kingower cemetery - a very popular spot with the "in-the-know" locals - and visit the Orchid Terraces, as well as doing some other walking and exploring.

If you can't come for the whole time feel free to join us for a day. (see Club agenda)

Rita Mills

SUPPER ROSTER

Sept F. and E. Blake Oct G. Sitch, E. Kelly

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. Inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.

Committee: George Broadway (Pres), Barbara Maund (Sec),
Maggie Oliver (VP), Rita Mills (Newsletter), Kaye Turner
(Program Sec), Ern Perkins (Treas), Margaret Dunne,
Geoff Sitch, Robyn Holden, Gunter Liebl, Elma Kelly.
Librarian: Lesley Perkins.

NOTES FOR AUGUST

CORELLAS JOIN COUNCIL. Two Long Billed-corellas were seen sitting on the town hall on 19/9/88. This perch was taken although handy perching-trees were close at hand. This as well as being an interesting observation, is a new locality record.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS. (New locality records marked #)

#Red Capped Robin at Kalimna (R. Mills)

#Spotted Quail-thrush at Kalimna (RM)

#Whiteface (small flock) at Sandon 11/8/88 (E. Perkins)

White Goshawks (3) at Natimuk (RM)

Crimson Rosellas in the town area 18/8/88 (EP)

White-winged choughs at Fogarty's Gap (EP)

Little Ravens at Bradford. Flock of 90. 20/8/88 (EP)

Dusky Woodswallows at Bradford 20/8/88 (EP)

#Family of Black Ducklings at Mt Alexander 20/8/88 (G. Broadway)

Pallid Cuckoo (2) at Wattle Flat 15/8/88 (RM)

#Pallid Cuckoo calling at Mt Alexander 20/8/88 (GB)

#Brown-headed Honeyeaters with 3 babies at Wattle Flat 15/8/88 (R. Mills)

#Crested Shrike Tit at Bells Swamp 15/8/88 (B. Maund)

#Shovellers (4) on Bells Swamp 15/8/88 (BM)

Dusky Moorhen on Campbells Creek 24/8/88

PLANT OBSERVATIONS (New locality records marked #)

Geebung, Pale Sundew at Escott Grave, 13/8/88

Early Nancies, Hovea in flower at Muckleford 9/8/88 (G. Sitch)

#Juncus sp. A. (un-named species) at Fogarty's Gap, Porcupine Flat and Bradford railway line 20/8/88

#Broad-leaf Rush at Norwood Hill 24/8/88

#Yellow Star (Hypoxis glabella) at Porcupine Flat and Bradford Railway line (20/8/88)

Drooping She-oak along disused railway, Maldon North.

Swan Plant and Agave Lily along roadside at Nuggetty.

#Rough Wattle along 3 Chain Road, Bradford 20/8/88.

#Blue Caladenia along old railway line, Bradford

#Pale Sundew along old railway line, Bradford.

#Climbing Sundew, also along Bradford railway line.

#Wallaby Grass (Danthonia tenuior), Fogarty's Gap

#Common Rush (Juncus amabilis) at Porcupine Flat and Fogarty's Gap, 20/8/88

Gold-dust Wattle in flower along Fogarty's Gap road, 20/8/88. This is unusually early.

#Jointed Rush at Norwood Hill 24/8/88

#Blackberry at Norwood Hill 24/8/88

GORSE BITTER-PEA with fasciation was shown at the August meeting by M. Dunne.

SPREADING WATTLE was reported to be coming into flower

near Walmer. This wattle begins flowering in summer (often very early in the new year) in many parts of the district, and flowering at this time is unusual (for Castlemaine)

URN HEATH AT WATTLE FLAT

Urn Heath has been found growing in Wattle Flat Forest by Rita Mills, for a new locality record for the plant list. Urn Heath is scattered through the local forests. The specimen in Wattle Flat is unusual in that the buds, and to some extent the flowers, are pink.

PLANTS IN FLOWER on 23/8/88 included Mosquito Orchid and Leopard Orchid (at Wattle Flat), Golden Moth (at Kalimna and Wattle Flat). In Kalimna, Drooping She-oak, Ploughshare Wattle, Bitter Cryptandra, Honey-pots and Buttercup have been seen in flower.

HOLIDAY COMING UP? HOW ABOUT HORSHAM?

We have made Horsham our base on several holidays and recommend it highly. Apart from plenty of accomodation and a good shopping centre, it is handy to the Arapiles (wildflowers, earlier than here, and birds, as well as spectacular scenery, and a couple of walking tracks for the fit and energetic), Lake Natimuk (water birds), the Jane Duff Memorial Park (walking track with mallee vegetation, picnic area and dam), the Little Desert (hardly needs recommendation!), Warracknabeal (a very pleasant town on a dammed creek, which is great for walks, and two good Museums including the Mallee Machinery Museum, which is very interesting), and the Grampians.

We recently spent a week there, one of our main aims being to get photos from the spots where Major Mitchell did his sketches around the Arapiles, but there were many more places we would have liked to have visited if we'd had the time, places such as the historic towns to the west of the Grampians, Rocklands Reservoir, and Edenhope with its swamp with lots of birds on it almost in the centre of the town.

We stayed at the Wimmera Lakes Caravan Park this time, in an on-site cabin-van, with en-suite, heating and microwave oven, but we had to provide our own bedding - we really roughed it! (even had a colour telly!) This kind of accomodation is quite reasonably priced, and very comfortable.

Rita Mills.

Mar 11-13 OCEAN GROVE CAMPOUT at Uniting Church camp.
\$16 per day, including 3 meals. Marine biology cruise, beach walk, rock shelves, mangrove swamps, Edwards point, snorkelling, Ocean Grove nature reserve etc. A joint WVFNCA and VFNCA campout. Mark it in your diary.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Fri 9 Sept. THE GRAMPIANS with Jane Calder. 8.00 p.m. in high school canteen.

Sat 10 Sept. BLACK HILL, KYNETON. Meet at 1.30 sharp at SEC., Mostyn Street.

Sat 17 Sept. TARNAGULLA. Excursion with Maryborough and St Arnaud F.N.C. Meet at 27 Doveton St at 10.00 a.m. or at Tarnagulla at 11.00 a.m.

Wed 14 Sept. CASTLEMAINE NORTH EXCURSION. The first of the Wednesday afternoon excursions. Meet 118 Blakeley Rd at 4.15 p.m. Leader is R. Mills.

Mon 19 - Wed 21 Sept. MELVILLE CAVES CAMPOUT. Contact R. Mills for details. Day trippers on Sept 20 and 21 can meet the group at the main Melville Caves picnic ground at 9.30 a.m.

Wed 28 Sept. GOLDEN POINT. Leader E. Kelly. Meet new Information Centre, Melbourne Rd at 4.15 p.m.

Sat 1 Oct. BICENTENARY WALK THROUGH KALIMNA. A walk through the Kalimna bushland. Meet outside the high school (Lawson Pde) at 2.00 p.m.

Wed 5 Oct. NORWOOD HILL. Meet end of McKendry st at 4.15 p.m. (Turn east off Wheeler st into Coulthard st. and then south at the next corner along McKendry St)

Wed 12 Oct. ODGERS ROAD. Excursion to R. Murrell property. Meet Rose Gardens car park (Downes Rd) at 4.15 p.m. Leader E. Perkins.

Fri 14 Oct. KAKADU with John Zwar

Sat 15 Oct. SANDON FOREST

Fri 21 Oct. WARBY RANGES. W.V.F.N.C.A. campout
8.00 p.m. Fri: Orchids with Roger Briggs.
9.00 a.m. Sat: Excursion to Warby Ranges
6.30 p.m. Sat: Annual meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A.
8.00 p.m. Sat: Booklaunching - Plants of NE Vic.
9.00 a.m. Sun: Excursion to Reef Hills, Benalla

Sat 29 Oct. MUCKLEFORD FOREST Festival excursion

Sat 5 Nov. MUCKLEFORD FOREST Festival excursion

Fri Nov 11. PAT BINGHAM - A CONTRAST IN ISLANDS